

Power With Limits

Trace why governments form and how the Constitution limits power.

SS.7.CG.1 "Demonstrate an understanding of the origins and purposes of government, law, and the American political system."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that explain why people needed a government or laws. Circle each branch of government and number its job 1, 2, or 3.

Building a Government

- ① People form governments when they need a fair way to make shared decisions and keep order. In the American colonies, many people objected to British rule because they had little voice in laws and taxes. After declaring independence in 1776, the states first worked under the Articles of Confederation. That plan created a weak national government. Problems such as unpaid debts and difficulty handling disputes led leaders to meet in Philadelphia in 1787 and write the Constitution.
- ② The Constitution begins with "We the People," showing that government gets its authority from the people. It creates a federal system, dividing power between the national government and state governments. It also separates national power among three branches. Congress is the legislative branch, which makes laws. The president and executive agencies are the executive branch, which carry out laws. The judicial branch includes the federal courts, including the Supreme Court, which interpret laws and decide cases when disputes arise.
- ③ Government is limited by the rule of law, the idea that laws apply to everyone, including leaders. The Constitution protects certain individual rights, while laws help people live together safely and resolve conflicts peacefully. Checks and balances give each branch ways to limit the others. For example, a president may veto a bill passed by Congress, and Congress may override that veto. These rules aim to prevent any one person or branch from gaining too much power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What problems under the Articles of Confederation helped lead leaders to write the Constitution?

2 What does “We the People” show about where the government gets its authority?

3 Name the three branches of the national government and state one job of each branch.

4 How do the rule of law and checks and balances limit government power?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence plan for a school government. State one purpose for the government, create one rule that applies to everyone, and explain how different groups would share power so no group has too much control.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that explain why people needed a government or laws. Circle each branch of government and number its job 1, 2, or 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What problems under the Articles of Confederation helped lead leaders to write the Constitution?	The national government was weak, debts were unpaid, and it was difficult to handle disputes.
2	What does “We the People” show about where the government gets its authority?	It shows that the government gets its authority from the people.
3	Name the three branches of the national government and state one job of each branch.	The legislative branch, Congress, makes laws. The executive branch, led by the president and executive agencies, carries out laws. The judicial branch, including federal courts and the Supreme Court, interprets laws and decides cases.
4	How do the rule of law and checks and balances limit government power?	The rule of law makes laws apply to everyone, including leaders. Checks and balances let each branch limit the others, which helps prevent too much power in one person or branch.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our school government would help students solve problems fairly and keep the school safe. One rule would be that everyone must use respectful language, including student leaders and adults. A student council could suggest rules, while a principal and staff group could carry them out. A review group of students and teachers could decide whether a rule is fair and ask for changes.

Accept plans that include a clear purpose, one broadly applied rule, and a realistic sharing of power among at least two groups. Students may use school-based groups other than those in the sample if their roles limit concentrated power.